

BACKGROUND

Fueled by climate change, the annual Western wildfire season has grown longer and more intense. Where the threat used to peak between August and November, we are now seeing massive wildfire events earlier in the Summer and continuing through the end of the year.

Last year alone, California experienced more than 9,600 fires which burned more than 4.1 million acres, consumed more than 10,000 structures, and claimed 33 lives.

It is imperative that we commit enough manpower and resources to combat the threat that such devastating wildfire seasons pose to life and property.

Unfortunately, some of our most experienced Federal firefighters work so many overtime hours each year that they reach an overtime pay cap and become ineligible for additional overtime compensation. Others are forced to pay back money they have rightfully earned fighting wildfires.

NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Federal firefighters from the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior are paid on the General Schedule (GS) pay scale based on their seniority and performance. They make a base salary and are paid overtime when they exceed eight hours a day.

However, there is an annual premium pay cap that limits how many overtime hours for which these firefighters can be compensated.

This arbitrary pay cap places an unfair expectation on federal fire personnel to work long hours for less or even no pay, and serves as a dangerous disincentive to respond to more fire incidents, especially later in the fire season. California's worst wildfires often occur late in the fire season, further illustrating the problem we face.

The Forest Service estimates that up to 500 senior-level firefighters either stop participating or do not request pay for hours worked once they reach the pay cap. This has a significant negative impact on federal wildfire response capabilities.

WHAT THE LEGISLATION WOULD DO

Our bill would create a statutory waiver for Federal firefighters responding to wildfire emergencies to ensure they receive fair compensation for all overtime hours they work.

This waiver would apply to Forest Service and Department of the Interior personnel engaged in emergency wildland fire suppression activities.

CONCLUSION

For wildland firefighters, working long hours in dangerous conditions is often considered a necessary part of the job. It is crucial that this demanding work be recognized, and that these heroes be appropriately compensated for the critical service that they perform.

I hope my colleagues will join me in support of this bill. Thank you, Mr. President, and I yield the floor.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 19—RECOGNIZING JANUARY 2021 AS “NATIONAL MENTORING MONTH”

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. SMITH, Mr. REED, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. BROWN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. PETERS, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. LANKFORD, and Mrs. CAPITO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 19

Whereas the goals of National Mentoring Month are to raise awareness of mentoring, recruit individuals to mentor, celebrate the powerful impact of caring adults who volunteer time for the benefit of young people, and encourage organizations to engage and integrate quality in mentoring into the efforts of the organizations;

Whereas there are young people across the United States who make everyday choices that lead to the big decisions in life without the guidance and support on which many other young people rely;

Whereas a mentor is a caring, consistent presence who devotes time to a young person to help that young person discover personal strength and achieve the potential of that young person;

Whereas quality mentoring encourages positive life and social skills, promotes self-esteem, bolsters academic achievement and college access, supports career exploration, and nurtures youth leadership development;

Whereas mentoring happens in various settings, including community-based programs, elementary and secondary schools, colleges, government agencies, religious institutions, and the workplace, and in various ways, including formal mentoring matches and informal relationships with teachers, coaches, neighbors, faith leaders, and others;

Whereas mentoring programs have been shown to be effective in helping young people make positive choices;

Whereas studies have shown that incorporating culture and heritage into mentoring programs can improve academic outcomes and increase community engagement, especially for Alaskan Native and American Indian youth;

Whereas young people who meet regularly with mentors are 46 percent less likely than peers to start using illegal drugs;

Whereas research shows that young people who were at risk for not completing high school but who had a mentor were, as compared with similarly situated young people without a mentor—

(1) 55 percent more likely to be enrolled in college;

(2) 81 percent more likely to report participating regularly in sports or extracurricular activities;

(3) more than twice as likely to say they held a leadership position in a club or sports team; and

(4) 78 percent more likely to pay it forward by volunteering regularly in the communities of young people;

Whereas students who are chronically absent are more likely to fall behind academically, and mentoring can play a role in helping young people attend school regularly, as research shows that students who meet regularly with a mentor are, as compared with the peers of those students—

(1) 52 percent less likely to skip a full day of school; and

(2) 37 percent less likely to skip a class;

Whereas youth development experts agree that mentoring encourages positive youth development and smart daily behaviors, such as finishing homework and having healthy social interactions, and has a positive impact on the growth and success of a young person;

Whereas mentors help young people set career goals and use the personal contacts of the mentors to help young people meet industry professionals and train for and find jobs;

Whereas each of the benefits of mentors described in this preamble serves to link youth to economic and social opportunity while also strengthening communities in the United States; and

Whereas, despite those described benefits, an estimated 9,000,000 young people in the United States feel isolated from meaningful connections with adults outside the home, constituting a “mentoring gap” that demonstrates a need for collaboration and resources: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes January 2021 as “National Mentoring Month”;

(2) recognizes the caring adults who serve as staff and volunteers at quality mentoring programs and help the young people of the United States find inner strength and reach their full potential;

(3) acknowledges that mentoring is beneficial because mentoring supports educational achievement and self-confidence, supports young people in setting career goals and expanding social capital, reduces juvenile delinquency, improves positive personal, professional, and academic outcomes, and strengthens communities;

(4) promotes the establishment and expansion of quality mentoring programs across the United States to equip young people with the tools needed to lead healthy and productive lives; and

(5) supports initiatives to close the “mentoring gap” that exists for the many young people in the United States who do not have meaningful connections with adults outside the home.

SENATE RESOLUTION 20—PROVIDING FOR SUFFICIENT TIME FOR LEGISLATION TO BE READ

Mr. PAUL submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 20

Resolved,

SECTION 1. TIME FOR READING OF LEGISLATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be in order for the Senate to consider any bill, resolution, message, conference report, amendment between the Houses, amendment, treaty, or other measure or matter until 1 session day has passed since introduction for every 20 pages included in the measure or matter in the usual form plus 1 session day for any number of remaining pages less than 20 in the usual form.

(b) POINT OF ORDER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Any Senator may raise a point of order that consideration of any bill, resolution, message, conference report, amendment, treaty, or other measure or matter is not in order under subsection (a). A motion to table the point of order shall not be in order.

(2) WAIVER.—Paragraph (1) may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. All motions to waive under this paragraph shall be debatable collectively for not